

November 7, 2017

City of La Crosse Human Rights Commission
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

Re: Complaint of Genean Thomas vs. the Housing Authority of the City of La Crosse

Dear Commissioners:

The following is a partial response to the Housing Authority's response to my complaint.

1. Much of the Housing Authority's response is focused on the four eviction cases filed against me by them. The first three cases were dismissed and are closed. The Housing Authority (hereinafter referred to as "HA") did not make its case(s) at the hearings, so I do not understand why it is attempting to retry them now. The last attempt by the HA to evict is technically still pending. However, Judge Bjerke did rule in Case No. 2017SC1543 that I would be allowed until the end of November 2017 to pay the back rent of \$1154.00. If that back rent is paid, then Judge Bjerke stated that I would be allowed to stay in my home. At that hearing, my attorney stated to Judge Bjerke that he had a check in the amount of \$500.00 made out to the HA. This is money that was provided to me from the emergency fund of Western Technical College in La Crosse where I am currently a student. Ms. Deborah Dobrunz from the La Crosse Area Family Collaborative was in court at that time and directly told Judge Bjerke that whatever back rent was still due after applying the \$500.00, would be paid by her organization. However, before that could happen, the HA would need to provide an explanation for the amount it alleged that I owed them. That has been done and the back rent has been paid.

That the HA has attempted four times to evict my family and has essentially lost all four of those times, lends itself to a reasonable conclusion that the HA – and specifically Ms. Alberts - is acting out of ill will towards me based on my race and color. In fact, in their last attempt to evict me, they insisted that even if I paid the back rent, that they wanted my family evicted.

2. The HA has in its response mischaracterized what happened in Case No. 2017SC1045. I was confused as to what the HA was asserting I owed them. However, so was Judge Levine who stated at that eviction hearing: "The system is confusing at best. Exhibit 6 is confusing. She still hasn't paid rent in this time. I know what the Thomas family has gone thru in the last year and a half. May 16th – Notice to Quit or Pay Rent was served. June there was a re-submission of the Zero Income. The June 5th letter is confusing it states re-examination and re-certification. The confusion invalidates the 14-day notice. Eviction is dismissed." [Courtroom Minutes. June 30, 2017. p. 3]
3. I believe that once a comparison is made between how Black families (and perhaps families of color in general) are treated by the HA and how white families are treated, that a pattern of discrimination against Black families will be clear. According to the HA manual (p. 11-15) and Ms. Alberts' testimony at a Human Rights Commission hearing

several months ago, the HA will look at past criminal conduct of an applicant as an indicator of future conduct that “would adversely affect the health, safety, or well being of other tenants or staff or cause damage to the property.” [See page 11, 8.3 Suitability (B)(3).] Ms. Alberts in her testimony stated that the HA would look at an arrest alone as evidence of criminal activity whether or not that person had been found guilty of a crime. I have no arrests or criminal convictions. However, one of my neighbors who the HA used to testify against me in the first eviction case, had been charged with three felonies and was convicted of three misdemeanors prior to being approved for a public housing unit. That neighbor (who was moved to another unit in Schuh Homes after that hearing) is white. Again, I believe that with a wider investigation by the Human Rights Commission, that a difference in treatment of white applicants and tenants and Black applicants and tenants will become clear.

Sincerely,

Genean Thomas

Genean Thomas

Dated: 11-7-17

